

Robert's Worst Sheep Shearing Day —EVER!

Written and Illustrated by
Kelly Swain, Linda Green and Leo Glass

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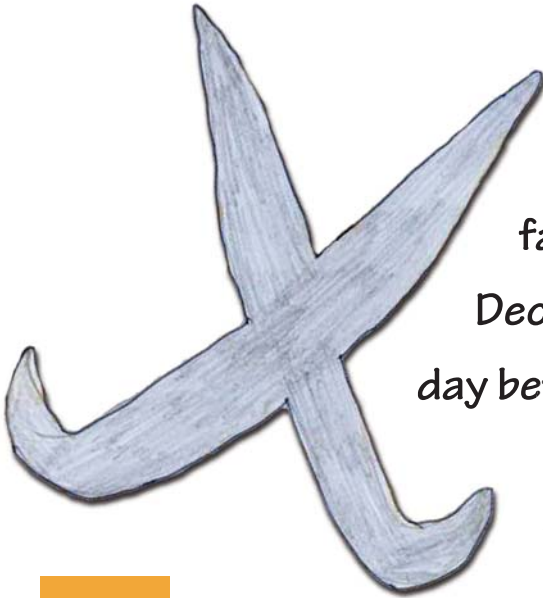
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Sheep Shearing Day on Tristan da Cunha



In our community, Edinburgh of the Seven Seas, Sheep Shearing Day falls in the month of December. The men go out the day before sheep shearing to catch all the sheep and put them in a large pen near the gardens of a place on the island called the Potato Patches.

INTRODUCTION

There are over 200 sheep roaming free on our volcanic island of 98 square kilometres. During the course of the year you may see them roaming in the patches area, and above the fenced areas where there is fresh grass for them that's not been grazed by the cows.

The day of shearing the men go out early in the morning, about 8.00 a.m., to gather up their own sheep which they recognize by their ear marks. There's a great deal of noise, baas and shouting, as they herd their sheep into smaller pens to be sheared.

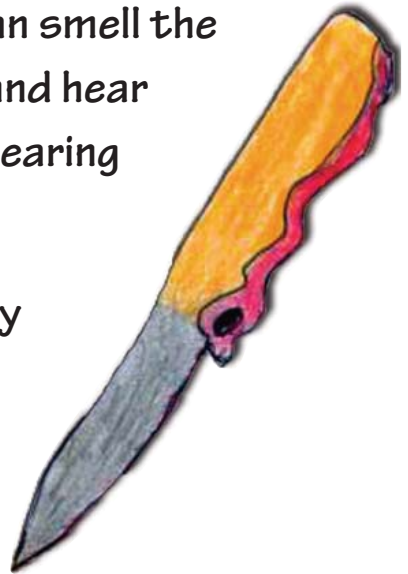


Several sheep are sheared at the same time with hand shears. Then each sheep has a colour put on its body so that in the

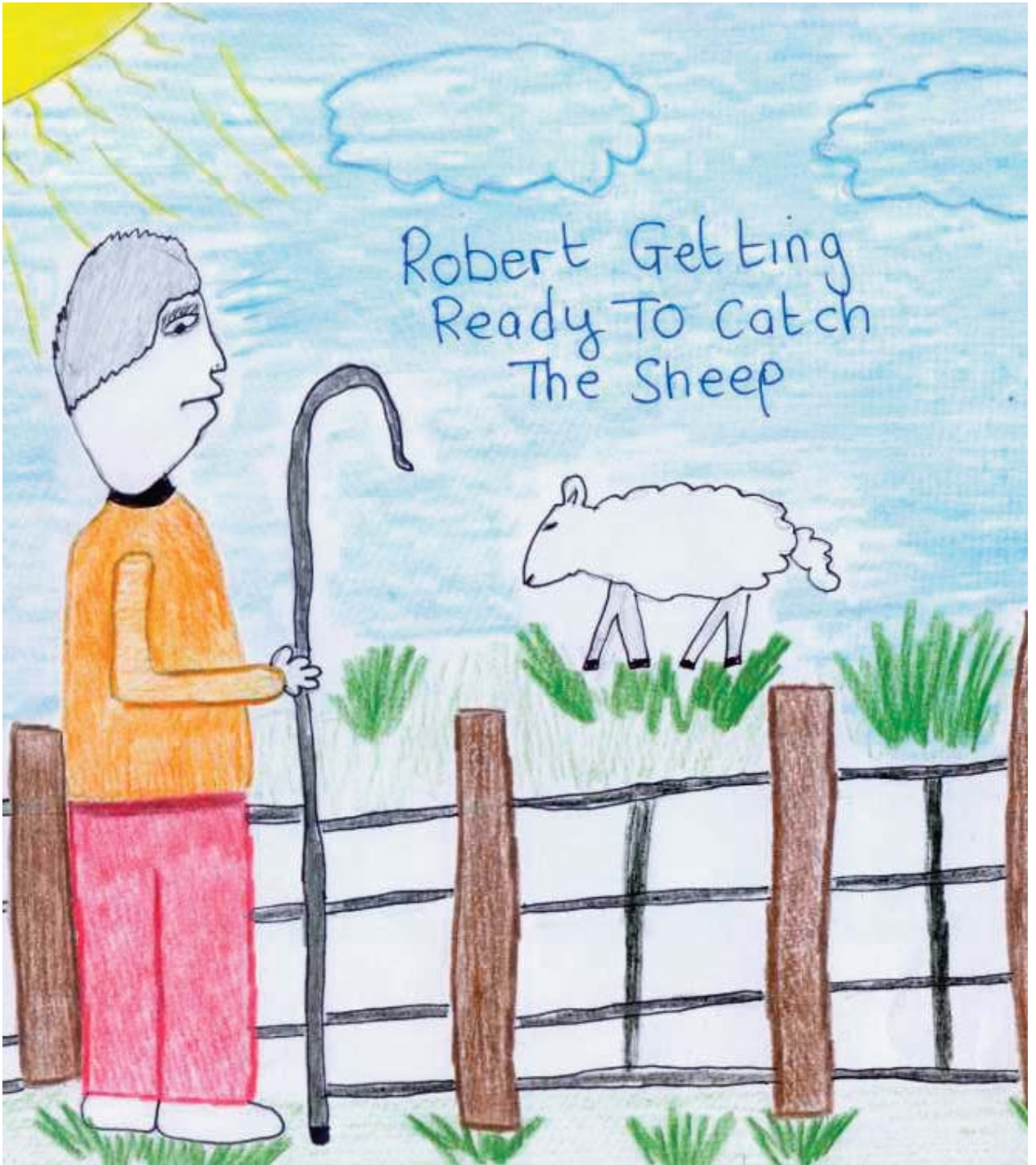
future the owners can tell which sheep is theirs.

Later on Sheep Shearing Day the women come out to the pens with food and drinks for the men. Then as each group finishes the families go back to their homes. Normally late that night groups of people have drinks and a barbecue. You can smell the meats sizzling on the barbeques and hear the jubilation that ends Sheep Shearing Day all around the town.

Sheep shearing is a tradition every year and an opportunity to celebrate on Tristan da Cunha, South Atlantic Ocean, population approximately 264.

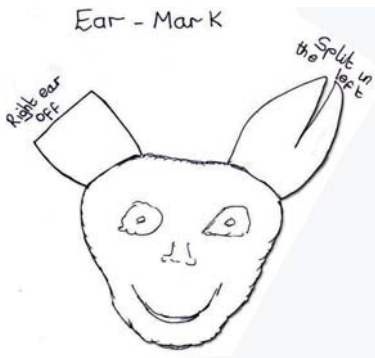


Robert Getting
Ready To Catch
The Sheep



Robert's Worst Sheep Shearing Day—EVER!

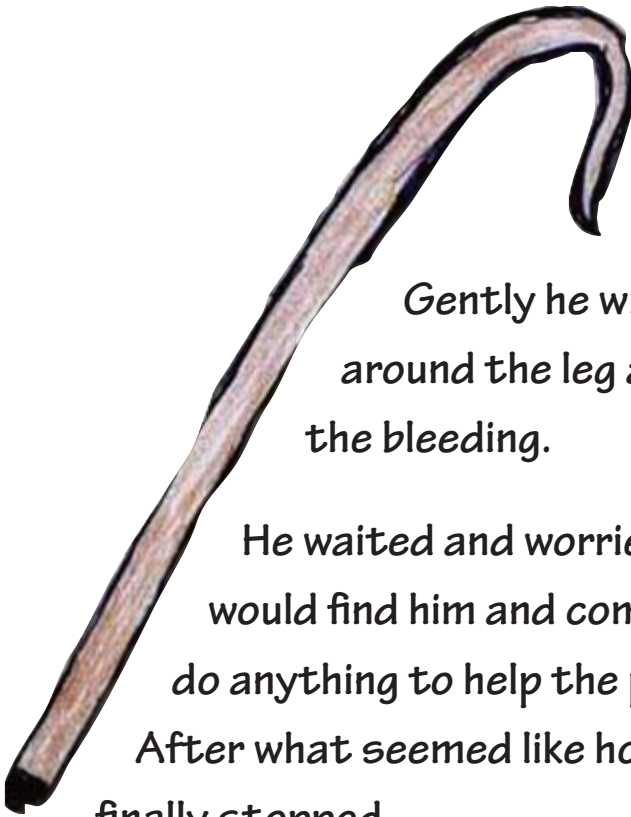
Robert was tired of waiting for his family and his friends to get ready for Sheep Shearing Day. He could hear what his mum and dad were discussing as they talked about what they were going to do.



Well, he would catch his white snowy sheep all by himself. He knew it roamed near Dick's Hill. He would recognize it by its ear mark as it had the right ear off and a split in the left ear.

There it was! Robert approached uphill towards the sheep. He almost had it in his grasp but when he tried to catch the sheep, it ran away from him with a hop and a spring. Then, while it was fleeing, the sheep's foot got caught up in the wire of a fence. The sheep fell and Robert could see that in a split second it was badly injured. Its leg was broken and its stomach cut open.

“Oh no!” thought Robert. “The sheep has a baby inside.”
He was very scared. If the sheep bled a lot, he might
lose both the sheep and its baby.



When Robert caught
the bleeding sheep
he tied its legs
together with a rope.

Gently he wrapped his fleece
around the leg and stomach to stop
the bleeding.

He waited and worried hoping the vet
would find him and come to see if he could
do anything to help the poor injured sheep.
After what seemed like hours the bleeding
finally stopped.



Robert was relieved when Patrick finally came a little while later, cleaned up the wound and stitched it. The sheep went to the vets to deliver her lamb. But, even though everyone was trying hard to save her so that the baby could come out, the stitches started to tear apart. Robert was very upset and broken-hearted.

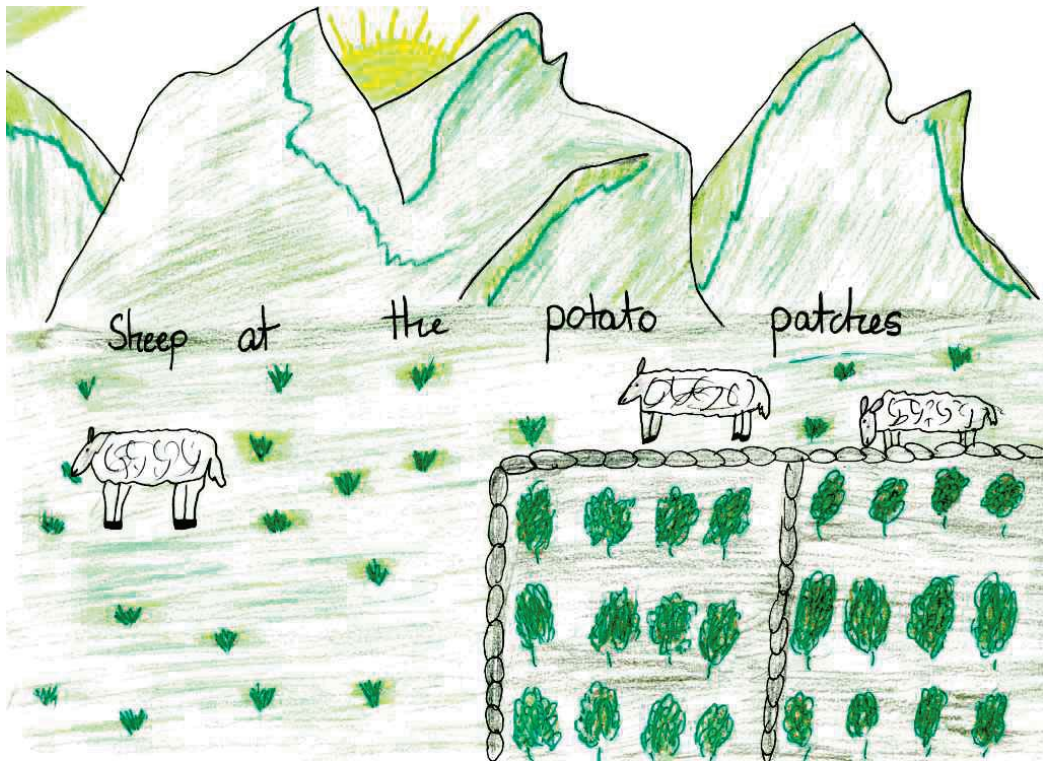


A few weeks later the weakened sheep and her little lamb were brought home. Robert made a fuss looking after them.

Patrick had given Robert some vitamin C tablets to help the mother get better. Yet, in spite of the extra care, the sheep only lived for a month or so.

Eventually things started going better for Robert. Although the mother had died, the little furry fluffy white lamb lived and brought them all much joy. Thanks to Robert's efforts, it was saved.

His family started calling him, "Robert the hero" because he'd stuck by the injured sheep that day and for about two months he'd fed the orphan lamb with milk. He'd saved the baby lamb.

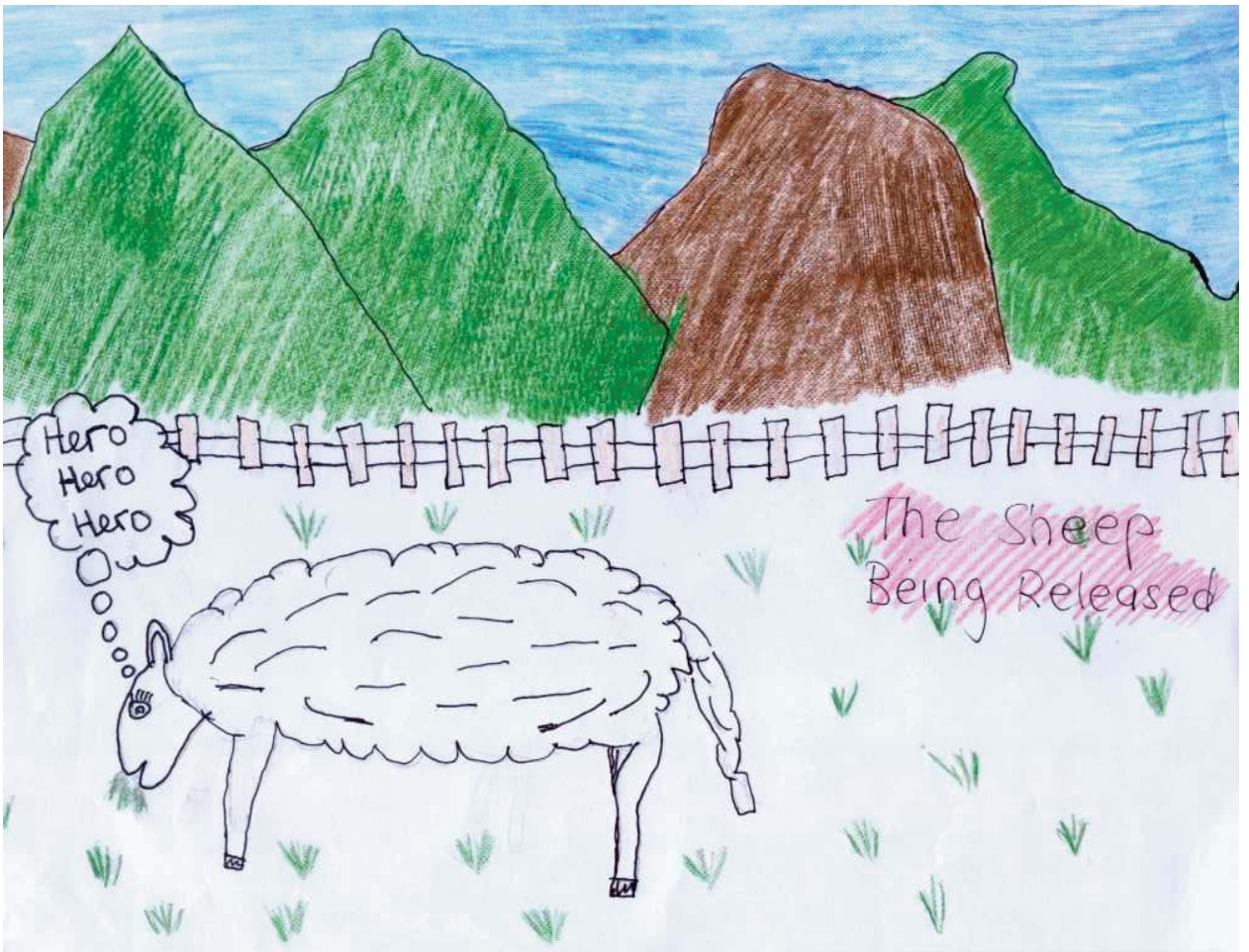


When the little lamb was finally big enough Robert took him out to the Potato Patches and let him go with the other flocks of sheep who roamed there. He had the same mark as his mother, right ear off with a split in the left ear.

When his lamb ran off, Robert heard it call out. It sure sounded as if it was saying, "HERO! HERO! HERO!" "Now that has to be my imagination", chuckled Robert as "HERO" drifted off in the wind towards Go Home Bay.

"But, it sure feels good to hear it!" Robert thought as he headed home to Edinburgh of the Seven Seas.

Just maybe— it hadn't been the worst sheep shearing day ever.



Acknowledgements

Following in the wake of my 2010 adventure helping give birth to the wonderful story *Elisapee of the Arctic: Mallikjuak Adventure*, I decided to try to work with the young people of Tristan da Cunha. The small volcanic island set remotely in the South Atlantic has only about 260 inhabitants of whom approximately 50 attend St. Mary's School. Education Officer Jim Kerr, who I met on board the *MS Edinburgh* on our eight days of stormy seas, organized the visits with the Level 3 and 4 students. The Level 3 students were 10 and 11-years-of-age and the Level 4 students were 11 and 13-years-of-age. I had studied up on Tristan da Cunha's colourful history and was prepared to jump-start the brainstorming process, but, the young authors quickly came up with healthy lists of their own ideas. They collaboratively agreed upon two books. I had copies of *Elisapee* and we quickly went over the process that the Inuit children used to start the book in workshop and then edit and complete it via email. The young people were on fire during the three days I worked with them. I was delighted how they took to using the plot graph and quickly integrated dialogue. After my departure, their teachers Marlene and Sharon worked with them on the editing process and Jim continued to shepherd communications.

I would like to thank Dawn Repetto, Head of Tourism, for her support of this project. I am thankful as well to have had Iris and Martin Green, as hosts on Tristan; they showed me its beauty and its hospitality.

As with Elisapee, graphic designer Mary Cook volunteered her incredible talents. And in spite of my editing, Mary always turns a careful eye to make sure that our texts are flawless. Thank you.



To the tourists visiting Tristan, or on-line, we hope that you take this small memento as a gift for young people in your lives. Mary and I have now worked with youth in the far north, Nunavut, and in the far south, Tristan da Cunha. It gives great pleasure to see them tell stories that originate in their lives. We hope that this story will inspire your young people.





Linda Green – Age 13. I like fishing and growing potatoes. I like life on Tristan because there are lots of things to do and you are free to walk about.



Leo Glass – Age 11. My interests are sports, climbing Tristan's mountain and drawing. I like the way the island is peaceful because there is no crime or any other bad thing on the island.



Kelly Swain – Age 13. I am interested in wildlife and conservation. The thing I like most on Tristan is that there is a lot of freedom. You can go anywhere without having trouble.